



JONATHAN E. FIELDING, M.D., M.P.H.
Director and Health Officer

JONATHAN E. FREEDMAN
Chief Deputy Director

313 North Figueroa Street, Room 806
Los Angeles, California 90012
TEL (213) 240-8117 • FAX (213) 975-1273

www.publichealth.lacounty.gov



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Gloria Molina
First District

Mark Ridley-Thomas
Second District

Zev Yaroslavsky
Third District

Don Knabe
Fourth District

Michael D. Antonovich
Fifth District

September 15, 2009

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D. M.P.H. *JEF*
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **FREE ROAMING CATS AT ALLAN B. SHEPHERD SCHOOL**

During the past few days, Board members may have received email messages from members of the public regarding free roaming cats at Del Aire County Park and the Allan B. Shepherd School, both in the City of Hawthorne. One or more of the messages had in the subject line "DEATH SENTENCE TO ALL FERAL/STRAY CATS IN L.A. COUNTY."

In early June 2009, the Department of Public Health Environmental Health (EH) Division received a complaint from a resident of the City of Los Angeles regarding an accumulation of cat feces on the baseball field at the Allan B. Shepherd School. EH staff were informed that a number of students attending the school are physically challenged and/or immune compromised. EH was also informed that an individual had been providing food and water to a significant number of free roaming cats on the school property and an adjoining County park. According to the referral information, the cats are fed through a hole deliberately cut in the fence separating the two properties, and that fleas and accumulated feces were a significant problem on the school property.

After several discussions with the school, and in an effort to assist the school district in eliminating the flea infestation and accumulation of feces, EH advised that traps could be set on the school property. EH also contacted the Los Angeles County Animal Shelter in Gardena to make arrangements to accept all trapped cats from the school property. Both the shelter and the school were in agreement that this would be the most effective means of addressing the problem. It is noteworthy that a janitor has alleged that he was physically threatened by the individual feeding the cats when he asked the individual not to do so.

As of September 13, the school district had contracted with Stanley Pest Control to trap cats on the school property, and transport them to the animal shelter in Gardena.

Each Supervisor
September 15, 2009
Page 2

A number of allegations have been made regarding statements attributed to EH staff, and the email messages also suggest that EH had posted a notice at the Del Aire County Park. EH did not posted any notices in this matter, however, the school has posted a sign on school property. An EH staff person was drawn into conversation with an individual who asked about the cats during a follow up visit to the school and park. During the conversation, the EH staff advised that the cats were being trapped and transported to the animal shelter. He also advised that the Department's principal objective was the elimination of unsanitary conditions on the school grounds and the associated risks to students due to potential contact with fleas and feces.

If you should have any questions or require additional information, please let me know.

JEF:ajb

c: Chief Executive Officer
Acting County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director of Animal Care and Control